

Testimony in Support of S.B. 284:
An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status
March 6, 2022

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee;

My name is Julia Rosenberg. I am a pediatrician and physician scientist, originally from Connecticut, who has returned to my home state to practice medicine in New Haven, where I work in the community as a pediatrician.

I am writing in support of S.B. 284, An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status.

As a pediatrician, I have a simple mission: to provide compassionate care for vulnerable children and families. However, because undocumented children are currently ineligible for state Medicaid, this not possible for approximately 13,000 undocumented children in our state who could be eligible with passage of this bill. With S.B. 284, Connecticut has the opportunity to join our neighbors Vermont, Maine, and New Jersey who passed legislation in 2021, as well as the six states and Washington, DC who already provide undocumented children the healthcare they need. Connecticut is poised to lead the way in ensuring all of our residents, regardless of documentation status, receive the health care they need.

Children's health suffers without insurance coverage. Compared with their uninsured peers, insured children:

- Avoid risky behaviors (like drug and alcohol use)
- Do better in school, have better school attendance, and have more successful careers
- Have better health as adults, with fewer costly and painful chronic conditions

As a pediatrician, I worry and care for the children I see, but I worry even more for those whom I do not see—those who cannot receive care because of lack of insurance eligibility. With regular healthcare, children and parents build trusting relationships with their clinicians. Parents turn to physicians to promptly identify everything from developmental delays to mental health disorders to medical problems. The relationship built from consistent, reliable care can reduce unnecessary and expensive emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and preventable illnesses.

For the many undocumented children without insurance who have already faced significant trauma, serious problems may only come to medical attention when it's too late. That results in costly, and sometimes dangerous, consequences that should have been preventable—from hospitalizations to permanent developmental disability.

The needs are especially pressing during the current child mental health state of emergency. I applaud our state in addressing this pressing need. Passage of S.B. 284 is critical to support the mental health of all children in Connecticut.

Insuring all residents regardless of documentation status is an upfront investment that will ultimately result in a brighter and healthier future for Connecticut's next generations. Thank you for your time and consideration in the passage of S.B. 284, which will benefit not only Connecticut's children and families, but also the health and wellbeing of our state and its future.

Sincerely,

Julia Rosenberg MD MHS